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ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST

PART I. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR ACTION

1. Project Title: Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex

2. Type of Proposed Action:

Members of the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC) propose to develop a 30' X 40' Community Center at the new Cowboy Action Shooting (CAS) facility at the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC). The proposed Community Center would provide a shaded shelter to prevent heat-related health problems, a meeting area, and a place to eat meals for shooters who participate in the State Match.

3. Location Affected by Proposed Action:

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is located approximately 5 miles north of Great Falls, Montana, 1 mile east of Highway 87, at 30 Sportsman Trail, Great Falls, MT, 59404, Lat. 47.5730378, Long. 111.223764, Section 16, Township 21 North Range 4 East.



Figure 1 – Aerial View of Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex, Great Falls, Montana.

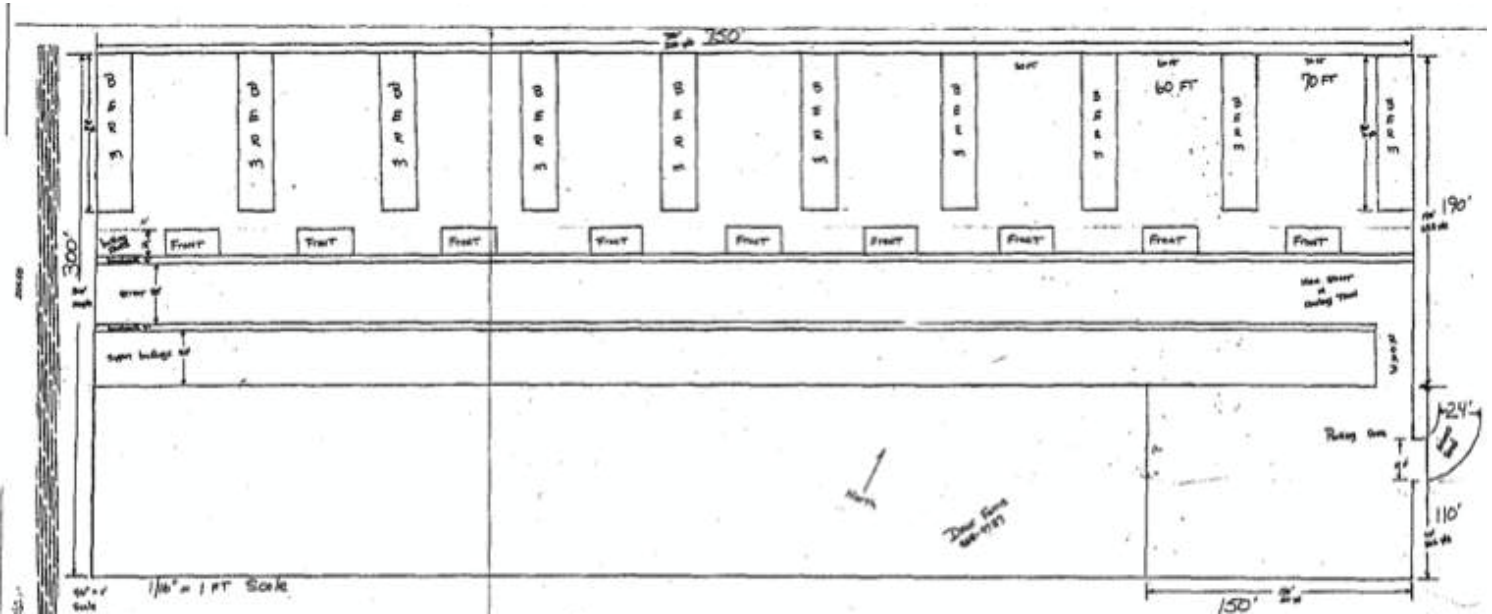


Figure 2. Concept Plan for the Cowboy Action Shooting Facility.

4. Agency Authority for the Proposed Action: MCA 87-1-276 through 87-1-279 (Legislative established policies and procedures for the establishment and improvement of shooting ranges) and MCA 87-2-105 (Departmental authority to expend funds to provide training in the safe handling and use of firearms and safe hunting practices). The Montana Legislature has authorized funding for the establishment of a Shooting Range Development Program providing financial assistance for the development of shooting ranges. Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) has responsibility for the administration of the program, including the necessary guidelines and procedures governing applications for funding assistance under the program.

To be eligible for grant assistance, a private shooting club or a private organization:

- (a)(i) *Shall accept in its membership any person who holds or is eligible to hold a Montana hunting license and who pays club or organization membership fees;*
- (ii) *May not limit the number of members;*
- (iii) *May charge a membership fee not greater than the per-member share of the club's or organization's reasonable cost of provision of services, including establishment, improvement, and maintenance of shooting facilities and other membership services; and*
- (iv) *Shall offer members occasional guest privileges at no cost to the member or invited guest and shall make a reasonable effort to hold a public sight-in day each September, when the general public may use the shooting range for a day-use fee or at no cost; or*
- (b) *Shall admit the general public for a reasonable day-use fee.*

5. Need for the Action(s):

Cowboy Action Shooting (CAS) is one of the fastest growing shooting sports in the world. Shooters travel from region to region and State to State to participate in CAS matches. To date, there has not been a CAS range near Great Falls although there are many CAS shooters who live in and near Great Falls who have had to travel to other areas to participate in matches. Building a CAS range at the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC) provides a local range for shooters who live in the area and also provides more opportunities for shooters who travel to matches from other areas. The proposed Community Center would

further the development of the CAS range which will attract shooters from all of Montana and the United States. It will also enhance the use of the range for other shooting disciplines.

6. Objectives for the Action(s):

The proposed project would contribute to the development of the CAS range at GFSSC and would provide additional opportunities for existing disciplines at GFSSC as well as use by new groups such as 4-H CAS Clubs and the Great Falls Chapter of the Well-Armed Woman. The proposed Community Center would provide a shaded shelter to prevent heat-related health problems, a meeting area, and a place to eat meals for shooters who participate in the State Match

7. Project Size: estimate the number of acres that would be directly affected:

The proposed project would involve less than ¼ acre of the 3-acre CAS range.

8. Affected Environment (A brief description of the affected area of the proposed project):

The GFSSC is located on 960 acres of both privately owned and leased land. The GFSSC entered into a 50-year lease agreement with Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks in 2003 to lease 600 acres of state-owned land. In addition, the GFSSC purchased 360 acres in fee title in 2004. The property is not located within a floodplain and there are no permanent surface waters or wetlands on the property. The range offers shooting opportunities for rifle, pistol, shotgun, archery, and black powder shooting.

9. Description of Project:

The proposed project involves construction of a 30' X 40' Community Building.

▪ Construction of Community Building	\$12,179.23
▪ Total Project Budget	\$12,179.23
▪ Total Funding Requested from FWP	\$ 6,089.62

10. List any Other Local, State, or Federal Agency that has Overlapping or Additional Jurisdiction:

None

Permits, Licenses and/or Authorizations:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Permit</u>	<u>Date Filed/#</u>
N/A		

Funding:

<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Funding Amount</u>
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks	\$6,089.62

11. Affiliations, Cooperating Agencies, User Groups and/or Supporting Groups:

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex (GFSSC) is located on 960 acres of both private land deeded to the GFSSC and land leased to the GFSSC by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (FWP). This is a private range with a membership fee, though the range is open free to the public on select days and for a day use fee on other days. The Skeet Club is open free to the public any day the skeet range is open. Approximately 15 organizations use the range each year, including: Missouri River Shooters Association, Ed McGivern Pistol Club, Sun River Skeet Club, Rattlesnake Butte Archers, Great Falls Police Department, Montana Highway Patrol, Boy Scouts, Weapons Collectors Society of Montana, 4-H, The Well-Armed Woman Chapter, Malmstrom Air Force Base; Cascade County Sheriff's Department; US Border Patrol, Department of Homeland Security; US Forest Service; Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks; and Department of Interior.

12. History of the Planning and Scoping Process, and Any Public Involvement:

Because the Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is a nonprofit private shooting club for members, there has been no public involvement in the planning process. Proposed range development proposals have been discussed with the club members and the associated project vendors and contractors.

13. List of Agencies Consulted/Contacted During Preparation of the EA:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

14. Names, Address, and Phone Number of Project Sponsor:

Gary Gillis, 226 9th Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405. (406) 453-0393.

15. Other Pertinent Information:

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex is a nonprofit private shooting club. The closest shooting range providing similar shooting opportunities is in Simms, Montana, 45 miles from the GFSSC.

Shooting range applications require the participating governing body to approve by resolution its submission of applications for shooting range-funding assistance. Resolution Date: January 28, 2015.

PART II. IDENTIFICATION OF THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVES

Alternative A, the **Proposed Alternative**, and **Alternative B**, the **No Action Alternative**, were considered.

Alternative A (Proposed Alternative) is as described in Part I, paragraph 9 (Description of Project): to construct a Community Center Building at the Cowboy Action Shooting range at GFSSC. There are beneficial consequences to acceptance of the **Proposed Alternative**.

Alternative B (No Action Alternative) Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Shooting Range Development Grant money would be denied and the area will remain as an active shooting range without the proposed improvements. The no action alternative would have no significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences. The range will continue on with present conditions. Land use would remain the same.

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action whenever alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider and a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented: Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There were no other alternatives that were deemed reasonably available, nor prudent. Neither the proposed alternative nor the no action alternative would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

Describe any Alternatives considered and eliminated from Detailed Study:

None. Only the proposed alternative and the no action alternative were considered. There was no other alternative that were deemed reasonably available, or prudent. Neither the **Proposed Alternative** nor the **No Action Alternative** would have significant negative environmental or potentially negative consequences.

List and explain proposed mitigating measures (stipulations):

None

PART III. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Abbreviated Checklist – The degree and intensity determines extent of Environmental Review. An abbreviated checklist may be used for those projects that are not complex, controversial, or are not in environmentally sensitive areas.

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats				X		#2
3. Introduction of new species into an area				X		
4. Vegetation cover, quantity & quality				X		#4
5. Water quality, quantity & distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		#5
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology & soil quality, stability & moisture				X		#7
8. Air quality or objectionable odors				X		#8
9. Historical & archaeological sites				X		#9
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

2. & 5. There are no delineated wetlands and no natural water sources within the area proposed for development. No critical wildlife habitat would be affected. Any resident or transient wildlife may leave the immediate area during road re-surfacing activity.

4. The elimination of vegetation for the construction of the proposed Community Center building will not change the overall abundance and diversity of plant species within the area. The proposed project occupies a small portion of the property. Due to prior land use, native vegetation has been disturbed in the area of the proposed project. Therefore, the proposed project will have a minor impact on native vegetation in the area.

7. The proposed project will cause limited displacement of soils but the developments will not substantially effect geological features or establish new erosion patterns. Soil disruption for this site is localized. Erosion control measures will be in effect and disturbed area will be reseeded.

8. Minor and temporary dust and vehicle emissions would be created by construction equipment during construction. However, the construction time is short and human effects will be limited due to the sparse population near the property.

9. This project uses no federal funds nor does it take place on state owned or controlled property; therefore, the Federal 106 Regulations and the State Antiques Act do not apply.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Below
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat				X		
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue				X		
4. Agricultural production				X		#4
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity & distribution of community & personal income				X		
7. Access to & quality of recreational activities				X		#7
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution & density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

4. The site is adjacent to surrounding agricultural land used for grazing and hay production.

7. The proposed developments will increase shooting opportunities within the community.

PART IV. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

All of the pertinent or potential impacts of the project have been reviewed, discussed, and analyzed. None of the project reviewed were complex, controversial, or located in an environmentally sensitive area. The projects being implemented are already on an existing range or altered areas that together with the insignificant environmental effects of the proposed action, indicates that this should be considered the final version of the environmental assessment. There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative.

The Great Falls Shooting Sports Complex's Proposed Alternative, to provide a safe, regulated shooting opportunity, is supported by its members and the public. Therefore, Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks should approve the Proposed Alternative (A) for the improvements as outlined in Part I, Paragraph 9.

PART V. ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur? No

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant? Individually, the proposed actions have minor impacts. However, it was determined that there are no significant or potentially significant cumulatively impacts. Cumulative impacts have been assessed considering any incremental impact of the proposed action when they are combined with other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future actions, and no significant impacts or substantially controversial issues were found. There are no extreme hazards created with this project and there are no conflicts with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan.

Recommendation and justification concerning preparation of EIS:

There are no significant environmental or economic impacts associated with the proposed alternative; therefore, an EIS is not required.

PART VI. EA CONCLUSION SECTION

Individuals or groups contributing to, or commenting on, this EA:

- Gary Gillis, 226 9th Avenue South, Great Falls, MT 59405. (406) 453-0393.
- MT Fish Wildlife and Parks

EA prepared by:

Andrea Darling, Darling Natural Resource Consulting, Montana City, MT 59634

Date Completed:

June 23, 2015

Describe public involvement, if any:

This draft EA will be advertised on FWP's web site and through a legal ad in the *Great Falls Tribune, Great Falls, MT* announcing a public comment period. A press release will also announce the project and comment period.